

truth or dare by bennyworm

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Additional Warnings In Author's Note, Bisexual Beverly Marsh, Bisexual Richie Tozier, Coming of Age, F/M, Fluff and Angst, Friends to Lovers, Gay Eddie Kaspbrak, Hijinks & Shenanigans, Internalized Homophobia, M/M, Mutual Pining, Mutual dumbassery, Period Typical Homophobia, Pining, Slow Burn, Sonia Kaspbrak's A+ Parenting, Teen Romance, actually warning for homophobic slurs if thats triggering, background benverly, its a reddie fic but also i just love the losers so much, no one moves away bc im self indulgent, period typical racism, theyre all such sweethearts ugh

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Beverly Marsh & Richie Tozier, Bill Denbrough & Everyone, Bill Denbrough & Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Mike Hanlon & Beverly Marsh, Richie Tozier & Everyone

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Summary:

"I dunno..." he said, and then stopped. "I mean. Well-have you ever been in love?"

She looked startled for a second, and then smiled. "Sure, I guess." They sat there for a few seconds in silence.

After defeating It, Richie realizes that he's not sure how to face the rest of his problems- what do you do after defeating an alien monstrosity? Being in love with his best friend is a big fucking problem, but he's not even sure how to deal with ordinary stuff

anymore. If you could call it ordinary.

AKA the losers struggle to overcome trauma, high school reddie, a shit ton of mutual pining, etc

1. prologue

Summary for the Chapter:

Because thinking about Eddie was dangerous when he was alone with his thoughts. Because he *knew he liked him more than he should, and he knew he always stared at him a bit too long and maybe he jokingly flirted with him a bit too much and-*

Richie had expected the nightmares to stop after defeating It. He realized now that it had been too much to wish for.

They'd gotten out of the sewers and practically collapsed. It had been such a relief, such a draining, *awful relief, and he knew that he had never loved his friends more in his life- and that he would never be the same again.*

What now?

That's what Richie had thought, and, looking at the rest of their faces, he knew they were thinking the same thing. What were you supposed to do after defeating an alien monstrosity? (*the blood oath the blood oath the blood oath*)

They had stood in that field and Stan had cut their palms with the broken coke bottle and it was the most united they had ever been. Sometimes he thought that even if It wasn't dead, It would stay away forever just from their sheer determination.

Most of the time he was scared shitless.

He wondered if everyone was taking it as badly as him, or if he was just weak, even though he was sure they were all scared still- they just might be better at dealing with it.

Beverly had confessed to him that she slept with the lights on. "I know it's silly," she said. "But I have to be sure It isn't there."

After being in the sewers, nowhere felt safe anymore. He remembered

the blood that had covered Bev's walls, and thought about it oozing through every drain in Derry, coming through the cracks in his walls and drowning him in his sleep.

He knew he was being too hard on himself. Because hell, even Bill had been scared. Big Bill, the leader, the unshakeable.

He knew it was over. Of course he did. But there were constant reminders of it.

The scars on all of their palms. The cast on Eddie's arm. God, *Eddie. He'd underestimated him for sure. But then again- he had changed. Richie wasn't sure what it was, but he was more brave than he had ever been before. It made him proud to think about it- when he did think about it. He tried hard not to think about Eddie when he wasn't around.*

And why is that?

Because thinking about Eddie was dangerous when he was alone with his thoughts. Because he *knew he liked him more than he should, and he knew he always stared at him a bit too long and maybe he jokingly flirted with him a bit too much and-*

Well. Better not think about it.

You want to play truth or dare, Richie?

Definitely better not to think about it.

2. school's out

Summary for the Chapter:

schools out, and the losers go to the quarry. richie recalls something that happened there before It was defeated

Notes for the Chapter:

the italics got kinda funky at some point bc html is weird sorry

“So,” Richie said, lighting a cigarette. “What’s the plan for today, Eds?”

It had been almost a year since that fateful day in the sewers, and Eddie and Richie waited outside the school for the rest of the Losers—including Mike, whose parents had decided that he was ready to go to a normal high school. It hadn’t been easy, but at least most of the kids at school hadn’t been openly rude. Of course there were always the bullies, the racists- but the worst were gone. Henry Bowers was gone, and his friends dead.

Richie nudged Eddie, who was squinting at the crowd of people, looking for Bill, who normally got there sooner than the others. “Hey, Eds, are you deaf? What’s the plan for today? It’s the last day of school, we gotta do something!”

Eddie frowned. “You really shouldn’t smoke, Rich. You’re gonna get cancer. Or you’re gonna get in trouble, whichever comes first. And that’s not my name!”

Richie clapped him on the shoulder. “Aw, Eds, are you really worried about me? That’s sweet.”

“No, asshole, feel free to die. It’s just inconvenient when you do it around me,” he said sarcastically. “Yes, I’m fucking worried about you! And Bev, too,” he added. “You guys should both quit.”

“Speak of the devil,” Richie cried, “here she comes! Miss Marsh, you

look absolutely *gorgeous*, dahling, simply stunning.”

Bev snorted. “I feel nasty. God, it’s so hot today I could take off my skin and my organs would still be burning up.”

“Ew,” said Eddie. “And then we can see your black lungs.”

“Eddie Kaspbrak Gets Off a Good One! Hey Bev, wanna quit smoking with me?”

She looked them both up and down as if considering the offer. “Nah,” she said.

“Figures,” Richie said. “Me neither. Sorry, Doctor K.”

For a second, Eddie looked disappointed, and then shrugged. “Suit yourself. Hi, Bill. Hi Stan.” Richie suddenly felt ridiculously guilty. What was it to Eddie if he smoked or not? Not his problem. *He cares about you*, he chided himself. And then thought *God, not in the way I care about him*. It was alright. He waved as Stan and Bill approached.

“Big Bill and Stan the Man! We’re waiting on two more and then the club will be complete. We’re going to the quarry.”

Stan frowned. “We never agreed on that. I thought we were just gonna go back to someone’s house or something.”

Before Richie could reply, Bill spoke up. “Actually, I think I agree with R-r-r-”

“Oh my God,” Richie said. “He’s going to say it, ladies and gents, here comes The Moment where Stuttering Bill Denbrough finally agrees with me.”

“Beep-beep, Richie,” Stan said, frowning at him.

“*Anyway*,” Bill said, “As much as it puh-pains m-me to say it, I think fuh-for once I agree with R-ruh-r-god *damn it!* Trashmouth. It’s hot as a b-bitch today, and we huh-h-haven’t gone in a long time.”

That settled it. No one could disagree with Bill- and why would they want to? He always made sense.

When Mike and Ben arrived, they all pedaled their way over to the quarry. As they walked through the barrens, Richie remembered the last time he had been there alone.

Officer Nell had made them promise not to come to the barrens without a friend, but he didn't care. He ran through the tall grass and tripped on a rock, landing on the ground in a heap.

Christ.

He had thought about going to one of his friends, but who? Eddie was on house arrest with a broken arm. (and you can't tell him oh no you can't tell him how scared you are) Everyone else was disappointed in him. Especially Bill. He couldn't believe he'd gotten in a fight with Bill. He hated himself more than he ever had.

He sat up and jammed his glasses back onto his face. Fuck. (don't cry, don't cry, come on, Rich)

The arcade. He hadn't even known that kid was Bower's cousin. And it shouldn't hurt that much, except it was true. He was gay. Probably.

And he'd gone and carved his and Eddie's initials on the Kissing Bridge. He wasn't even sure why at this point. Maybe an act of rebellion. Maybe a way of expressing his emotions when he knew he could tell no one. And he had run to the barrens, feeling dirty and shameful.

And now there he sat, silently willing his tears to dry up- though he wasn't sure why, because no one was even there.

And then he heard the grass crunching and rustling behind him and sat up straight. He wiped off his face and turned around. Someone was making their way over to him.

It was Eddie.

"Eddie? What are you doing here?"

Eddie smiled at him. "I was gonna ask you the same thing, Richie. What's wrong?"

He felt like he'd been hugged and punched in the gut at the same time. Eddie cared about him. He cares about me. He supposed that was obvious-they were friends, after all- but to hear those words from Eddie felt so comforting.

And then there was the other feeling. That awful, shameful feeling of oh-god-i-can't-answer-him-he'll-think-i'm-a-freak. So he just shrugged and said nothing.

Eddie sunk down into the grass next to him. "Richie, I know somethings wrong. What's the matter? Why are you crying?"

There was definitely something odd about how he was talking, but then again, they were rarely serious with each other, anyway. It's not like he made a habit of crying in front of his friends.

"Just- Bowers being an asshole. Like usual."

Eddie frowned. "Why so upset? If it's like usual."

"It doesn't matter, Eds. I'm fine, really."

He scooted closer. "Richie, you know I really like you, right?"

He felt like his brain was short circuiting, but he grinned ruefully. "Good chucks, Eds."

"I'm serious, Richie. I really, really, like you." He was leaning forward, oh God, oh God, he was too close. And then Richie was leaning forward, too, and he thought, This is it. Holy shit.

It was too easy.

Of course it was.

He was close enough to count the freckles on his face when Eddie said, "Huh. Guess you really are a queer. Gross. " Blood was pouring out of his mouth, and chunks of flesh crumbled off his face.

Richie scrambled away as fast as he could, but Eddie-no, It-gripped his arm and tugged him closer.

"This is what happens to little queers like you, Richie. This is what happens when you touch other boys."

He yanked his arm away and ran until he couldn't run anymore.

He looked at Eddie now and wondered how it would have gone that day if it had really been him that day.

When they got to the edge of the quarry, they hesitated for only seconds before Mike and Bev both pulled their shirts off and leapt off the cliff into the water. The rest of the losers soon followed suit, Ben and Bill practically scrambling to the edge as if refusing to be one-upped, Stan jumping in an almost dignified manner. Eddie went right after Stan, and shortly after they were all in the water, laughing and splashing at each other.

Later, as they lay drying in the hot sun, Bev squinted over at the other Losers lazily. "Well, that was a good way to start the summer."

Ben looked like he was struggling not to blush. "Yeah. Yeah, it really was."

Mike smiled. "We've only started. It's gonna be a hell of a summer."

“Hopefully not the same ‘hell-of-a-summer’ as the last one,” Stan said drily.

Richie cackled. “Stan The Man Gets Off A Good One! Yeah, I’d hope it wouldn’t be anything like that.”

It would be a hell of a summer nonetheless.

Notes for the Chapter:

do y'all spell it "drily" or "dryly"? i googled it and theres apparently no difference but idk if drily is a british thing i picked up somewhere
also @ anyone who cares: how often should i update this? and what are ur thoughts so far

3. have you ever been in love?

Summary for the Chapter:

bev and richie are mushy and sentimental for a hot sec, also typical clubhouse chaos

Two weeks after that day in the quarry, Beverly and Richie were sitting cross-legged on the hill that overlooked Derry and smoking. It had been fairly uneventful since school ended, save for the day Stan had convinced Richie and Bill to come bird watching with him and then nearly fell out of a tree in a series of events that he had previously thought too chaotic for Stan.

Other than that? Richie was bored out of his mind. But for now, he was content to sit there with Bev overlooking the town and say whatever bullshit came to his mind.

Bev nudged him. "What's on your mind, Rich?"

"I dunno..." he said, and then stopped. "I mean. Well-have you ever been in love?"

She looked startled for a second, and then smiled. "Sure, I guess." They sat there for a few seconds in silence.

"C'mon, Marsh, tell me more! Who was it- or actually, who is it?"

"I'm not sure if I should tell you..."

"You've gotta tell me, you can't just leave me hanging like that!"

She grinned. "Fine, as much as it pains me to say it... it's you."

"Oh, fuck off!" he said, and she let out a shriek of laughter. "Bev, I know I'm irresistible, but I'm already called for!"

"Oh?" she said, raising an eyebrow. "Pray tell, who?"

"Well," he said in a long-suffering voice, "since you asked nicely... Mrs. Kaspbrak and I are getting along *splendidly*."

She snorted. "God, Richie, keep telling that joke and maybe it'll come true."

He winked. "I'm sure that's what she wishes."

Bev took a drag of her cigarette and looked at him. "You know what? When you're not making the same annoying your-mom-jokes, you can be a pretty funny guy."

Richie smiled. It was probably the most comforting thing in the world to know he could make people laugh. Because, hell, what else could he do.

"Hey, Bev... other than the whole being-in-love thing, I think we'd be a pretty hot couple if we dated."

"Shut up!" she exclaimed. "Wait, you're not serious?"

"Of course not! I mean, yeah, but I don't wanna date. Here's my real idea: If neither of us are married by, say... thirty-five... we should just marry each other."

She shrugged. "Sure. Could be worse. I'm sure *I'll* find someone by then, but hey, why the hell not? That's what friends are for."

"Why Miss Marsh, I do declare!" he said in his southern belle voice. "We just might end up gettin' hitched!"

She swatted his arm playfully. "Hey, you never even answered your own question. Have *you* ever been in love?"

He shrugged. "Maybe."

"Ooooooh, *who*?"

He could practically feel his heart beating far too fast for its own good. *It doesn't matter, you don't have to tell her.*

"Hey, you didn't tell me yours, so why should I tell you mine? That's not fair." *And you have a hell of a lot more reasons to hide it than she does, oh yeah, Beverly might be embarrassed to say who she likes, but at least she's not a faggot like you, huh?*

"Pleeeeeease, Richie! I'll tell you who I like if you do!"

"Some other time then," he said. "But you'll have to go first."

"No way!" she said, her curls bouncing as she shook her head. "You'll just hear mine and then refuse to say anything!"

"Aw, come on, Marsh, have I ever went back on my word?"

"Probably, yeah."

He shrugged. "Whatever. Some other time."

-

The losers (minus Bill, who was at speech therapy) clambered into clubhouse one by one. Richie immediately made a beeline for the hammock, and Eddie was close behind. "Motherfucker!" he shouted when Richie leaped into the hammock before him.

"Funny you should say that, Eds, because me and *your* mother-"

"You think you're so funny, huh? It's my turn, you always do this shit-"

Just get in with me, he thought. *Just get in the hammock*. He just wanted to be close to him, to feel close and comfortable and safe. He interrupted Eddie's rant and said, "There's room enough for two, you know."

He looked down at him skeptically. "Last time we both tried to fit in this, you fell out onto the floor."

"Oh, Edward darling," he said in a posh British voice, "worrying about me? Quite sweet of you, didn't expect that, but-" He was interrupted by Eddie grabbing his arm in an attempt to pull him out of the hammock.

"Alright," said Mike, and Richie snapped back into reality. "I think you guys both got your hammock privileges revoked." He turned to Ben. "Your clubhouse, your rules. What d'you say we do about this?"

Ben shrugged. "It's not my clubhouse, it's our clubhouse."

Stan stood up from the overturned bucket he had been sitting on and strode over to the hammock. "Hey assholes, it's my turn."

Eddie stalked off to take Stan's place. "Good luck getting him out, Stanley."

Stan looked around until his eyes fell on Beverly. "Hey, Bev, a little help? "

Together they pulled Richie out of the hammock. He groaned and flopped onto the floor. "Betrayed by my own friends! Unbelievable." He got up and staggered over to Ben. "Haystack, you're the only one I can trust now. " At that, Ben smiled and shook his head.

"Cool it, Richie, " Bev said, rocking the hammock with Stan in it back and forth. Stan was stretched out peacefully, his eyes closed and that ridiculous shower cap on his head. He cracked open one eye and grinned. "Yeah, cool it, *Richard*."

"I'm not gonna take orders from a boy in a shower cap!" he cried.

Bev pointed at him. "You're talking pretty big for a guy who probably has bugs in his hair." All of them but Richie, Eddie and Mike were wearing shower caps, and at this Mike quickly pulled his on and grinned. "Yeah, Richie, how do those spiders feel?"

Richie looked to make sure Eddie hadn't put his on and said, "Well, me and Eddie aren't afraid of spiders. You guys-"

"Leave me out of this, trashmouth," Eddie said, but his tone was easy and relaxed.

Richie heaved a long-suffering sigh and plopped himself down next to Mike, leaning against his shoulder. When Ben, Bev and Eddie started a different conversation, Mike patted him on the back. "We're just messing, man. You know we love you," he said softly.

He turned to look at him, surprised. "Wow, Mikey, you guys weren't *that* bad."

"Well, yeah, " Mike said. "I just wanted you to know."

Richie smiled. "Thanks, Mike." *Mike is someone you can trust. You can tell him. Talk about your feelings. Who needs a shrink when you have such understanding friends?*

Actually? Never mind. You were too much of a pussy to tell Beverly, what makes you think you can tell Mike? Doesn't matter how understanding your friends might be if you can't even ask for help.

Before they defeated It, Mike had been the only one other than him to last the whole smoke ritual, and Richie felt a special sort of connection to him because of it. He remembered stumbling through that lush vegetation, clinging on to Mike's hand. The faint awareness that he was back in the small clubhouse, yet reaching across what felt so far, just to make sure Mike was still there with him- which faded then from his mind and was replaced with just how real that other, ancient version of Derry had been. Gripping onto Mike's hand harder when they saw It fall to earth, transfixed with horror.

He thought about reaching out and grasping Mike's hand now, but he didn't, content to just sit with his friends and know he was loved. *You can talk to him. You can tell them all when you're ready.*

No use bothering them about his stupid feelings now, though. *Especially* not in front of Eddie. It could wait.

Notes for the Chapter:

for anyone who has only seen the movies: in the book, theres a scene where the losers decide theyre gonna find out how to defeat It using a native american ritual where they fill the clubhouse with smoke and they leave one by one when the smoke gets too much

mike and richie end up being the only ones left and they kinda pass out and have visions whoopee

4. its gonna be okay

Summary for the Chapter:

eddie and richie both decide its time to come out. or maybe just, yknow, stick a hand or a foot outside the closet and wave it around a little bit.

Notes for the Chapter:

this fic mainly focuses on richie partly bc of how much i relate to (or project on :/) him but i thought id spice it up for this chapter

eddie

Eddie had mixed feelings about how the summer was going.

On the one hand, he felt unbelievably lonely. He'd never had a good relationship with his mother, but after he refused to use his inhaler or take his medications, their relationship had grown worse and worse. It had been about a year since the fateful placebo incident, but it was worse during the summer when he actually had to be around her. Sonia Kaspbrak was nothing if not determined-she refused to relinquish her control that easily, and the fact that Eddie refused to take his medications didn't stop her from trying to control him.

And when he could manage to get out of the house, he still sometimes felt that crushing, inexplicable loneliness. When he was with his friends, he felt safe, sure. He knew he was in good company with the people he loved, he just wished it was easier to be completely open with them. Not that he couldn't, it was just...hard.

But there were good parts to the summer. There was some sort of invincibility he had gained last year after defeating It, and now that he was out of school again he had the opportunity to exercise it. He was still afraid of sickness, of disease, of germs. But he wasn't afraid of pain.

He remembered when Henry Bowers broke his arm, and he'd *laughed*.

Because, hell, it wasn't that bad. He'd lived his whole life in fear of something like that, and then it happened and it *wasn't that bad*.

And he wasn't afraid of himself.

Afraid of how others might react to himself. Afraid of how he might get treated for being himself, sure. But at least he wasn't afraid of himself.

He knew he was gay. He'd known for a while, but he figured it had taken some change within him to admit it to himself. And so one day, when he heard someone call him a queer, he'd thought, *Well? So what? Maybe I am. Maybe I just fucking am.*

And the more he thought about it, the more he realized that it wasn't just that he didn't like girls, it was that he liked boys. And he wasn't scared of that.

Maybe sad. Maybe upset. But once he realized there was nothing he could do about it, he realized he *had* to be okay with it, and he wasn't afraid of himself anymore. Just like with pain.

It was others he was afraid of.

When Richie had suggested that day in the clubhouse that they just lie in the hammock together, his stomach had done a little flip-flop, and then he'd realized it wasn't just boys he liked- it was Richie.

He knew his fears were probably irrational- since when was the *Loser's Club* one to make judgments? But that didn't stop the panicked thoughts flying about his mind when Richie had smiled up at him almost enough to get his hopes up in a ridiculous way. *There's room enough for two, you know.* And so he'd done what he always did when he panicked about things like that- pushed him away. Said something stupid, snapped at him.

Now he walked next to Bill, who had just gotten back from speech therapy, and thought about the best way to talk about his problem without- well, without actually mentioning his problem- but he came up with nothing and so remained silent. After a while, Bill broke the silence.

“Cat got your tounge, Eds? What’s the m-muh-m-*problème*-deal, what’s the d-deal?”

Eds. He didn’t mind it when Richie called him that, even though he’d never admit to it, but when Bill said it, it just felt... weird. Like it just wasn’t special anymore. “Jeez, Bill, it’s bad enough that Trashmouth calls me that, but now I’ve gotta deal with you, too? That’s just unfair.”

Bill shrugged. “If you say so. But you still h-ha-haven’t answered my qu-question. What’s your duh-deal?”

“It’s kinda weird,” he said. *This is Bill. Big Bill, the trustworthy, the reliable. If you can’t open up to him, who can you talk to? No one.* “Promise not to freak out on me, Bill, because I feel like you might, which is weird because you’re not the “freak out” type but still, I just.”

“Eddie!” he said, almost shouting. “I’m not g-gonna freak out on you just because you tell me something wuh-weird.”

Eddie took a deep breath. He suddenly wished he had his inhaler with him. Another deep breath. *This is Bill. He’s better than them.* Bill was better than the people who carved hateful words on the Kissing Bridge, he was better than people like Bowers, he was better than the whole town. He’d been friends with him almost his whole life. No backing down now.

“I, uh. I think-” *You don’t think, you know.* “I mean.” He paused.

“C’mon, Eddie, sp-spit it out!” Bill said with a chuckle.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. “I’m gay.”

Bill was silent for a few seconds, and in those seconds Eddie considered taking it back and saying he was joking, or maybe just running and never showing his face again. But then Bill spoke.

“That’s not r-ruh-really *weird*, Eddie.”

Eddie scuffed his shoes on the ground. “You don’t think?”

"It's n-not my place to think, buh-because it's none of my b-business. But it r-ruh-really doesn't change things."

"It doesn't?" He hadn't expected him to react badly, but he hadn't-well. He didn't know what he expected.

Bill shook his head. "Nope."

"Thanks, Bill," he said. He felt so relieved he could cry, he could sing. If he had Bill's approval, he didn't care what the others thought.

Except he did.

"Hey, can you maybe not tell anyone about it, though?"

"Why not?"

Eddie shrugged. *It's because of Richie. It's because of fucking Richie, as usual.* It was because he couldn't handle it if anyone rejected him. He trusted all of his friends, but he wasn't ready yet.

He could wait. One person knowing was enough.

"I'm just... not ready yet. You know?"

Bill nodded. "Sure." They were still walking, but he leaned over and gave Eddie a weird kind of side-hug with his arm squeezing his shoulders. "Uh, g-good luck, I gu-guess."

maggie tozier

Maggie Tozier knew she wasn't the most *involved* parent, but she figured she did her best.

She knew there was something wrong, but just what she couldn't tell. The past year had been a hard one, and she couldn't figure why. Her son had always been a straight-A student, regardless of what his behavior might have been. He'd struggled his way through school the whole year, and now he spent the majority of his time at home in his room alone, pretty much only coming out for meals. She wasn't upset

with him, but she knew, she just *knew* there was a reason and whatever the reason was, it was a problem, because it was hurting her son. Wentworth had suggested that it was just high school, and that the first year is tough for everyone, and, *Come on, Maggie, teenagers are like that sometimes, it's a difficult transitional phase.*

She knew there was more.

She just didn't know what to do about it.

For what wasn't the first time this summer, she wondered how it would be like if she just had a girl. Someone she could talk to, someone she could understand.

He was just so different. Not in a bad way, she supposed. But in a strange way. His academic achievement couldn't be separated from the constant criticism from teachers. *Richard does not seem to know how to sit still in class. Richard must learn to be patient. Talks too much. Your son has a difficulty following instructions.*

She would never understand his relationship with his friends, his off color sense of humor-or how all of his friends were fine with it. And for Christ's sake, would the boy ever learn to sit still? To slow down, stop talking stay on one subject for long enough to have a focused conversation-

She started to walk up the stairs. She would talk to him. Ask him what's wrong. Yes, that was it.

She knocked gently on Richie's door and pushed it open when there was no reply after several seconds. She craned her head inside the room.

The floor was scattered with clothing, papers and other odds and ends. Richie lay curled up on the bed, facing the wall. He shook silently.

"Richie?" she said tentatively.

He drew in a long, shuddering breath. "Yeah, mom?"

"Are you okay, honey?"

He sat up, rubbed his eyes and gave her a watery smile. "Absolutely spiffing," he said, in what she figured was supposed to be a British accent. "Jolly good. My apologies, mother."

She shook her head. "Richie, what's wrong?"

He shrugged, but it looked like he was about to cry again. "It doesn't matter. Really, you wouldn't get it anyways."

"Honey, you can talk to me if there's something wrong," she said, sitting down next to him.

He shrugged miserably. "I wish I could, mom. But I just... can't."

What the hell is wrong? Why can't he tell me?

She reached out to touch his shoulder, and he flinched, so she put her hands in her lap and took a deep breath before saying, "It's hard being your age, Richie. Fourteen is a hard year." He nodded silently. "You're going to be fine, though, okay? You don't-" But you should, you should tell me, I need to know- "You don't need to tell me. But I love you no matter what."

He sniffed. "Mom, I-" He stopped. "You're not planning on taking that statement back anytime soon, are you?" he asked, chuckling weakly.

She smiled sadly. "Of course not, honey. You're my son."

"I'm gay," he said quietly.

What.

What?

"What?" she said, and then immediately regretted saying it.

He wrapped his arms around his knees and looked down. "I mean, I'm not, but I am, you know?"

No, I don't know. What the hell is he talking about?

“What do you mean by that?” she asked softly.

“I mean...I like girls... but I also really like...some guys.” He paused and then choked out, “Sorry.”

And then she was horrified, not at what her son had told her but at just how upset he was about it.

“Richie, it’s okay, don’t worry- don’t cry, honey,” she said, almost desperately. “It’s okay, it’s okay, I meant it when I said I’d love you no matter what.” She leaned over and hugged him. “It’s gonna be okay.”

Notes for the Chapter:

tbh i dont like how vulnerable a lot of fanfics make eddie bc hes so mf strong ok i feel like they dismiss a lot of his characters progress...not that he doesnt have vulnerabilities and traumas but i feel like they tend to ignore how much he grows as a character anyway if u were wondering yeah richies crying about being gay bc it be like that sometimes. maybe its just be but sometimes i just cry about being gay. its weirdly cathartic.